

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AID-20 SWF-02 IO-14 AGR-20

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NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 INT-08 PC-04 SCI-06 DRC-01 /204 W

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R 101458Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7789

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

UNCLAS NIAMEY 1451

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PFOR NG

SUBJECT: COL. KOUNTCHE MEETS WITH NIGERIEN PRESS CORPS

SUMMARY: INTERVIEWED BY PRESS CORPS, LT. COL. SEYNI KOUNTCHE SPOKE ON REORGANIZATION OF DROUGHT RELIEF, GROWING CONCENTRATION OF REFUGEES AROUND URBAN CENTERS AND CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT APPARATUS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT OF SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL COL. KOUNTCHE BEGAN MAY 8 PRESS CONFERENCE WITH OBSERVATION THAT SINCE MILITARY GOVERNMENT TOOK POWER THREE WEEKS AGO, ORDER HAS BEEN MAINTAINED, POPULATION CONFIDENTLY AWAITING APPROACHING RAINY SEASON, AND INITIAL COLDNESS TO NEW REGIME DISPLAYED BY NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES CHANGING TO UNDERSTANDING, SYMPATHY AND SOLIDARITY.

2. KOUNTCHE CLAIMED NEW GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT REORGANIZE DROUGHT RELIEF GOING WELL. ARMY HAS TAKEN OVER EFFORT AND THERE ALREADY POSITIVE RESULTS. KOUNTCHE SAID THAT BY WORKING WITH FMG AND UNDP/OSRO NEW GOVERNMENT
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HAD MANAGED TO ELIMINATE BOTTLENECK IN GRAIN DELIVERIES

AND SOON 1000 TONS OF GRAIN WOULD BE ARRIVING FROM NIGERIAN PORTS DAILY. AS FOR GRAIN ENTERING THROUGH PORT OF COTONOU, KOUNTCHE NOTED THAT PREVIOUSLY PRIVATE TRANSPORTERS WERE GIVEN CONTRACT TO SHIP GRAIN CH HAD RESULTED IN HIGH PRICES AND INEFFICIENCY. THE DAHOMEY-NIGER RAILWAY OFFICE HAS TAKEN CHARGE OF TRANSPORTING GRAIN FROM COTONOU TO PARAKOU AND IS EXPECTED TO PROVIDE 300 TONS OF GRAIN DAILY TO NIGER. CONTRARY TO PAST PRACTICE TRUCKERS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO TRANSPORT GRAIN TO SECONDARY DISTRIBUTION CENTERS AND NOT JUST TO LARGE URBAN CENTERS.

3. PRESIDENT TOLD PRESS CORPS THAT INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE SET UP MAY 4 TO AID DROUGHT VICTIMS HAD ALREADY TAKEN SEVERAL DECISIONS. FIRST WAS REVAMPING OF LOGISTICS SYSTEM FOR GRAIN DISTRIBUTION (SEPTEL). ALSO SEDENTARY POPULATION WOULD BE GIVEN TRANSPORT BACK TO ABANDONED VILLAGES, ENOUGH FOOD FOR NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS PLUS SEED FOR CROPS. NOMADS WOULD HAVE HERDS REFURBISHED WITH EMPHASIS ON QUALITY RATHER THAN QUANTITY. QUESTIONED ON PRESENCE OF MALIEN REFUGEES AROUND NIAMEY AND AYOROU, KOUNTCHE ANSWERED THAT THEY WERE AFRICANS AND AS LONG AS THEY WERE IN COUNTRY THEY WOULD BE TREATED AS THEIR NIGERIEN BROTHERS. HE SAID HALF OF 30,000-40,000 REFUGEES AROUND NIAMEY ARE MALIENS.

5. ON MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS PRESIDENT WAS ASKED WHAT SMC ENVISAGED IN AREA OF CLOUD SEEDING. HE REPLIED THAT PLANES HAD ALREADY BEEN PURCHASED AND OPERATIONS WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN THIS YEAR BUT HESITATED TO GIVE PRECISE STARTING DATE. ON CONTROVERSY OF EXPORT VERSUS STAPLE FOOD DROPS, KOUNTCHE EXPRESSED OPINION THAT BOTH WERE ESSENTIAL AND THAT DIVERSIFICATION NEEDED. BUCHE

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